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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 7080

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 044543

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TAGS: CASC CMGT AEMR AMGT ASEC

SUBJECT: CONSULAR CRISIS MANAGEMENT: 2008-2009 LESSONS
LEARNED

¶11. SUMMARY: Consular sections respond to individual crises daily, but larger scale crises add layers of complexity. 7 FAM 1800 and 12 FAH-1 should be the basis for your plans, but this cable provides examples of common lessons learned in different types of crises including the 2007 Lima earthquake, the 2008 Yaounde and Tbilisi evacuations, the 2008 terrorists attacks in Mumbai, and the 2009 Turkish Air crash in Amsterdam. Post lessons learned cables are available on CAWeb at: <http://intranet.ca.state.gov/services/cables/12709.aspx> and on the Office of Crisis Management Support's website: http://poems.ses.state.sbu/sites/portal/seso/cms/WebPage/s/Lessons_Learned.aspx END SUMMARY.

¶12. FIRST RESPONSE: It is important to decide who will be your first responders in an after hours crisis. Balance residential proximity to post with making sure that you will have experienced personnel for a second shift. Split into teams within the section. Some sample duties that could be given to different teams: incoming phone calls, confirming facts through contacts, processing related emergency ACS services, traveling to hospitals and morgues, casework with affected Americans and families, and interactions with the Department. See the Crisis Quick Response Guide on CAWeb for one post's general plan. Make sure that everyone in the consular section knows when and whether they should report and what their responsibilities are. Work with the public affairs section which should be monitoring how the local press is reporting the crisis and whether or not post's consular statements are being carried.

¶13. ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES: Don't underestimate the importance of office supplies. Dry erase boards, flip charts, poster boards, markers, tape, different colors of paper, clipboards, and pens were all "must-haves" for Mumbai and Tblisi when sharing information in a consular control room or phone bank. Pre-printed Privacy Act Waivers came in handy in Tbilisi and were cited as a "lessons learned" in Amsterdam. If an evacuation is a possibility, pre-print the DS-3072 promissory note. Have a sheet outlining the location of the U.S. mission, hours of operation, and what services are available in the Consular "go-kits" or backpacks to be distributed at hospitals, hotels, or other locations.

¶14. Alternate communication tools are also essential. In some situations, landlines will work, in others cell phones will. In a country with multiple cell phone providers, when one doesn't work, another may. In still others, text messaging may be your only option. Posts agreed that having an internet-based PDA in your crisis

kit is important; so is having cell and satellite phone chargers. If possible, also purchase chargers that you can use in your car. You should also have a list of official personnel's personal emails for backup communications. Check 7 FAM 1800 Appendix B for other ideas.

15. SECTION SUPPORT: Whether it was by soliciting and scheduling volunteers from the wider official community for consular phone work, bringing in food and water for an all-hours operation, providing mattresses and pillows for staff bunking at post, arranging transportation for response teams, or activating maintenance shifts 24/7 to keep the section clean and restroom facilities stocked, post management sections were essential partners in the consular crisis response. Work through potential needs in advance. Test out your consular control room. Does GSO know how you'd like the room set-up? Does IPC? What are the arrangements for quickly allowing LE staff to log on to computers after normal working hours, or for giving international dialing access to every phone? Are the landlines and the computers in your designated command center located near one another? Can post's cafeteria open for extended hours? Who will bring those much-needed office supplies, and what are they?

16. Don't forget your private partners and the value of nurturing contacts. Amsterdam noted that the private companies of the deceased were able to provide victims' family members with resources like cars and drivers. Mumbai took advantage of extensive LE staff contacts within the police and hotel industry. And of course, contacts with your counterparts at other foreign missions and a way to communicate with them, are

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critical in a mass casualty situation or evacuation involving different nationalities.

17. CA/OCS is always prepared to run PIERS checks for post so that consular staff on the ground can focus on other tasks. If the Consular Section is stretched thin, CA/OCS can help make preliminary identification of remains by comparing pictures sent digitally from post/country with passport photos. Amsterdam noted that its LEGATT was able to obtain fingerprint information from certain databases that was then used by Dutch authorities to identify American victims. The FAM and FAH provide guidance, but consular sections are always encouraged to contact CA for additional clarification. If, given the particular circumstances, something like charging for passport photos "doesn't feel right," check with Washington.

18. HANDLING INFORMATION: Tasking and information requests from Washington can be overwhelming. Make sure to provide the Department with a central phone number for all official consular-related calls so that previous shift leaders aren't inadvertently woken up. Post can then triage as appropriate. Post should also set up a Collective E-mail Mailbox on the GAL so that email traffic can be centralized and tracked. (This mailbox can be set up in advance and added to every user's profile.) Make sure that every volunteer has access to the inbox, but assign oversight specifically to certain individuals.

19. Use the flagging or category system to avoid duplicate responses. In Task Force 2, we ask volunteers to assign a blue "in use" category tag when they are working on an email. When the email is answered or action completed, the email is tagged green "completed" and moved out of the inbox into a folder in that mailbox. If an email will need follow-up, TF2 tags it with a red "action required" tag and leaves it in the inbox. Feel free to remind Washington to direct

requests or taskings to whatever address you create. Automatic email responses on individual accounts with standard talking points can also be helpful.

¶10. PUT PLANS INTO PRACTICE: Finally, as Yaounde noted, "while tabletop exercises are useful in refining plans, drills that require staff to actually execute the plan are necessary to identify hidden difficulties and avoid unnecessary delays during a real crisis." Contact the ACS Crisis Management Unit at CA-Crisis-Mgt@state.gov with questions, suggestions, or with requests for Washington participation in consular section exercises or drills.

¶11. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
CLINTON